

Study Series: Seamless

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Lesson Title: “The Letters” (pp. 87-99)

Session 7

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The main point of this lesson is: Following Jesus’s death and resurrection, the Bible continues to reflect God’s seamless plan in the spread of the gospel and the anticipation of the close of earthly history.

Focus on this goal: To help adults find hope in the fact God continues to bring about His seamless plan, even in the midst of today’s turmoil and evil

Key Bible Passage: Acts 13–Revelation

Before the Session

Obtain enough bookmark-sized papers to give each participant three bookmarks.

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

Invite adults to identify current world events they find concerning. Record responses on a marker board. Ask: Is it possible to be hopeful and optimistic in times like these? Why?

Emphasize the main point of this lesson and focus on this goal statements (p. 97).

Step 2. Paul’s Journeys Begin

Recall Session 6 concluded with Paul’s conversion. Paul shaped the New Testament and first-century world with his missionary journeys and letters. Discuss Day One, activity 1 (p. 87).

Note the locations mentioned in Acts 13–14. Read Acts 14:21-28. Explain those travels are known as Paul’s first missionary journey. His second missionary journey begins at the end of Acts 16; summarize Acts 15–16. Invite a volunteer to read Acts 17:1-15. Explain Paul wrote the letters 1 and 2 Thessalonians sometime after this. Point out that, just as the prophets fit chronologically into the historical books of the Old Testament, so many of Paul’s letters fit into the historical timeline of Acts.

Distribute three bookmarks to adults and request they place one in their Bibles at Acts 17:15, then turn to 1 Thessalonians. (OPTION: Each time you instruct adults to place a bookmark in Acts, encourage them to write at that spot in their Bibles the letters Paul wrote at that time.) Identify Paul’s focus in his letters to the Thessalonians (p. 88). Invite a volunteer to read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

Request adults turn back to Acts 17:15 and identify where Paul went next. Request a volunteer read Acts 18:1-11. Explain Paul eventually returned to Antioch then left on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:22-23).

Request adults identify from Acts 19:1,10 where Paul went first and how long he stayed there. Instruct adults to place another bookmark at Acts 19 and turn to 1 Corinthians. Explain Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians and perhaps Galatians while in Ephesus (p. 88). Invite volunteers to state what they regard as highlights from 1 and 2 Corinthians.

Identify the main emphasis of Galatians. Invite a volunteer to read Galatians 2:16,19-20.

Step 3. Paul’s Letters to Churches

Explain Paul’s letter to the Romans was written while he was in Corinth and enroute to Jerusalem (Rom. 15:25). Discuss Day Two, activity 1 (p. 89). Invite volunteers to share highlights from the book of Romans.

Briefly summarize Acts 21–24. Invite a volunteer to read Acts 25:9-12. Ask: How is Paul’s desire being fulfilled? Summarize Acts 27–28. Invite a volunteer to read Acts 28:30-31.

Identify the letters Paul wrote while under house arrest (p. 69), noting these are all places from his missionary journeys. Instruct adults to place another bookmark at Acts 28, turn to Ephesians 4:1, and identify one of Paul’s goals in this letter. Request a volunteer read Philippians 4:4. Consider why that is amazing considering Paul’s circumstances. Explain the purpose of the letter to the Colossians. Discuss Day Two, activity 2 (p. 90).

Step 4. Paul’s Letters to Individuals

Since Philemon lived in Colosse, Paul sent a letter to him along with the letter to the Colossian church. State the purpose of the letter to Philemon.

Explain Paul was released from house arrest, and at some point, wrote to his mentee, Timothy. Read 1 Timothy 1:1-4. Invite responses to Day Three, activity 1 (p. 91).

Explain Titus is another pastor to whom Paul wrote to give instructions on leading a church. Sometime after writing these letters Paul was imprisoned again, facing execution. During this time, he wrote his most personal letter to his son in the faith, pleading with Timothy to come be with him before his death (2 Tim. 4:9,21).

Discuss Day Three, activity 2 (p. 92).

Step 5. The General Letters

Explain what is known as the General Letters. Request volunteers read James 1:1 and Jude 1. Ask: Considering these two are half-brothers of Jesus, why is their identification of themselves pretty incredible?

State the time frame and goal of 1 and 2 Peter.

Point out the uniqueness of Hebrews and the goal of this epistle. Discuss Day Four, activity 1 (p. 94).

Step 6. The Books of John

Read the first paragraph of Day Five (p. 95). Discuss Day Five, activity 1 (p. 95), examining why those are valuable tools for believers. Note that John the beloved disciple emphasized love in all three epistles.

Ask a volunteer to read Revelation 1:1-2. Invite volunteers to share their perceptions of Revelation. Determine the main purposes of this book of prophecy. Discuss Day Five, activity 2 (p. 96).

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

Read the Day Five paragraph (p. 96) beginning with, ‘We’ve heard about Him . . ..”

Draw attention to the world events recorded on the board (Step 1) and ask: How can God’s seamless story empower you to remain hopeful and faithful in the midst of today’s turmoil and evil?

Close in prayer.

